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Claiborne Pell

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ADDRESS BY SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL
AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS
JUNE 3, 1976

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The Museum Services Act is an idea whose time has come. I am indeed happy to bring you that message today. You will note I use the words "Museum Services Act." I believe they are familiar to you. They now officially belong to the legislation passed by the Senate on May 20, just a few days ago.

I am especially pleased with this important development because I have been working on this legislation for the past five years.

In the beginning *on my* I was virtually alone in the Senate in advocating additional support of this kind for our nation's museums. But persistence has brought forth rewards -- and I believe we are now on the threshold of a new era for museum accomplishment.

We have won -- and you have won -- over initial legislative disinterest and sometimes adamant opposition.

Three years ago, in 1973, when I had the privilege of chairing in the Senate the most comprehensive hearings on museum needs we had ever undertaken, the then Administration took an entirely negative view.

In essence, the Administration said it was the wrong time for such legislation -- and even if it were the right time, which was not a foreseeable possibility -- it was the wrong legislation. In all my sixteen years of experience in the Senate, I can scarcely remember a more negative statement of Administration policy.

But times change.

If you remain steadfast to a goal in our democratic society and with our democratic form of government, sometimes you can help bring about such change.

You cannot do it alone, however.

You must have help -- and in this case valiant help.

So at this particular and special time in the history of museum development as it relates to Federal support, let me congratulate you for being farsighted enough and knowledgeable enough to help engender that assistance. It represents a combined strength of voice and purpose.

John Brademas, my valiant colleague and counterpart in the House of Representatives spoke to you earlier this week. If I were to single out a few museum heros, however, I would want to mention Joseph Noble, President of the American Association of Museums, Richard McLanathan, its Director, and Parul Perrot, Secretary of the Association and

well known for his leadership at the Smithsonian.

But I would also recall heroes from the past -- Kyran McGrath, the Association's long-time Director, who helped in the drafting of the initial Museum Services Act of earlier years. And especially, I would like to mention -- with deep regret at this loss to us, but with abiding admiration in his abilities -- Steve Wexler, the Counsel of both the Subcommittee on Education and the Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities. Steve, known to so many of you and so tragically killed eight months ago, brought the Museum Services language into reality. He so helped with the idea, whose time has come today.

What is this idea? Why is it so important?

In essence it is the concept of giving to museums the ability and the opportunity of expanding their services to ever greater numbers of our people.

And this is of high importance because at the present time museums face a continuing crisis of need. They simply do not have the wherewithal to meet the requirements placed upon them by those same growing numbers of people.

In the Congress I have often repeated that message. In December of 1973 in a statement to the Senate I discussed a survey on museums just then published by the National Endowment for the Arts.

I pointed out these facts to my Senate colleagues -- that based on the survey:

One. Operating costs increased markedly in 90 percent of the museums surveyed.

Two. Annual operating expenditures for the museums surveyed totalled close to \$480 million--\$478,912,000. Not included in these figures were major capital expenditures.

Three. Two-thirds of the museums surveyed found their current budgets did not enable them to provide adequate services.

Four. To achieve proper utilization of their facilities, museum directors reported that a median budget increase of 45 percent would be required.

In translating these findings into the sums appropriate for federal support, I pointed out that approximately \$145 million would be needed by museums within a two to three year time span, if they were to meet their responsibilities for improved service.

In today's Senate report interpreting for the Congress the Museum Services Act, which is officially Title II of the comprehensive bill reauthorizing the Arts and Humanities program -- we again stress the dimension of these needs. And we emphasize that the survey I have mentioned took place in 1973, and that needs -- far from diminishing since then -- have increased.

In view of the statistical information we have assembled, and what it indicates to us in monetary terms, we are certainly not extravagant in the sums we have authorized: \$15 million for the upcoming fiscal year, and \$25 million for the year following, fiscal 1978.

But we should all bear in mind that this is a four-year authorization bill. Beyond fiscal 1978 -- for two more years -- there are authorized "such sums as may be necessary." This is a so-called open-ended authorization. It leaves the appropriate future figure up to the Congress -- and that means also that figure is, in an important way, in your hands. As representatives of the museum world, and as leaders who are best informed on museum needs, you now have the opportunity of further persuading the Congress to your cause. A good beginning now needs development.

You may feel you have reached a peak.

Though this may be a moment to marvel at the view, and at the panorama it unfolds, it is hardly the time for wild surmise. We have reached a point from which we can gaze upon a broad new ocean; but in realistic and practical terms, we have scaled but the rocky crags of the foothills. We can enjoy the view today, but it is necessary to press on to the next mountain range. An anonymous poet, I might add, once wrote: "The view from here is nice enough. But let's get down to serious stuff."

And seriously, it's useful here to recall the beginnings of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities in the early sixties. That, too, began as an "idea". It continues to grow and develop -- but ten years ago, when the legislation was enacted, the annual appropriation was only \$5 million. Today it stands at more than \$160 million, in appropriated funds. And we would increase that total -- in both the Senate bill which was passed on May 19, and in the House bill which was passed on April 26 -- to \$250 million for next year, and to \$300 million the year following. Museum services are now fully included within those figures.

This rate of growth pleases me very much, as Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities since its inception more than a decade ago.

With particular reference to today's meeting, it is a rate of growth that should provide both incentives and examples to those most interested in the growth and capabilities of museums. Do not underestimate your abilities to influence public opinion.

I hope you are reading my message in this respect --
Loud and Clear!

And I hope, too, that an Administration which continues reluctant, in some quarters, to a Museum Services program can be guided by public opinion to a more enlightened attitude.

I am speaking very seriously here. Many of you have concentrated on the Congress in order to achieve beneficial results. That is right and proper. That is in keeping with the best functioning of our democracy. But you should not neglect in your efforts the Executive Branch. Remember that it is the Office of Management and Budget and ultimately the President who set the figures annually presented to the Congress in the President's Budget.

In recent years we have authorized funding for the Arts and Humanities which the President's Budget has drastically reduced. This year's reduction totaled exactly \$78 million.

How much will be recommended in the President's Budget for Museum Services for fiscal 1978? Will it be in keeping

with what Congress authorizes? That is a very large question -- it will depend, in part, on this fall's elections. But it can also depend, in substantial part, on your efforts. You may well want to ask candidates for our highest political office, and for other offices in the Congress and at State levels -- how do they feel about support for our nation's museums? Make your case well, and you can find strong affirmations. Remember that results, once thought impossible of achievement, have come to pass this spring.

Your case is an excellent one. I have believed in it ever since I came to the Senate in 1960.

The stepping stones to today's Museum Services Act are worth noting. The Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, of which I was the chief Senate sponsor, specified museums as recipients of federal support for the first time in legislation which set many precedents. In 1966 the National Museum Act, which I also sponsored, gave special recognition to the educational value of museums, again for the first time.

This value was further emphasized in the Education Amendments of 1974. As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, I was responsible for the section of that legislation which declared it to be the sense of the Congress to strengthen and enhance the educational contributions museums make at all levels of education.

With respect to the legislation reauthorizing here and now the Arts and Humanities program -- and including the new Museum Services Act -- let me also point out that two other parts, or Titles as they are called in proper parlance, can apply to museums. The legislation provides for a \$15 million challenge grant program to enable the Arts Endowment to strengthen cultural institutions for long-range planning and better fiscal stability. That challenge grant program can also apply to museums.

And Title IV provides for a new Arts Education program, at \$10 million a year, so that new and innovative ways may be found to add the valuable dimension of the arts into the educational process. Museums can also be important centers for this program's development. They are so specified in the language of the bill.

As you can see, I believe in your cause.

I believe in it because I see an enormous potential for museum development -- as sources for improved education, as places where we may go and embark, or reembark on the quest for knowledge...as places which serve to heighten our curiosity, as places where we may broaden our horizons and heighten our faculties of imagination, and as places where by learning about the past we may be better prepared to meet the future.

I mean to include within the scope of museums those historic houses which serve as landmarks of special value to our understanding of the past. In fact, again referring to the Senate report interpreting the purpose of the new Arts and Humanities legislation, we have placed a stress on the desirability of supporting projects relating to the preservation and enhancement of historic houses. They constitute museums of a special kind.

In looking toward the future and to the new programs yet to unfold, let us also remember ourselves the past and present and the scope of museum assistance programs now ongoing. I am referring, of course, to the programs now being conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The "special project" type of assistance which the Endowments have been providing is indeed welcome. The Endowments are to be commended. They have opened up new opportunities for museums, where none previously existed. It is definitely and assuredly the intent of the Congress that this assistance be continued and further developed. But it is not, in itself, enough. It falls short of the mark, especially in those areas which concern administrative and operational support. We need to cover all aspect of museum needs -- and we need to do it with dispatch.

Above all, we need to allow for maximum options for support. These options must be well coordinated. The Senate-passed bill is especially designed to provide this essential coordination-- and to avoid duplication and possible waste. For in these underfunded areas which concern our cultural well-being, every dollar invested must be well spent.

For museums the legislation, now headed for Conference and final refinement between Senate and House, contains a variety of added options: the option of basic support, the option of improving long-range financial and managerial capabilities, the option of an enhanced educational role -- a role, indeed, which can bring museums into the very center of the educational process.

In sum, to me this bill -- this legislation, developed over many, many months, and for museums over a period of years -- embodies opportunity.

It is in keeping with the kinds of opportunity we should be providing for our people as we enter our Third Century of life.

Louis Harris, the distinguished poll-taker, spoke about such opportunities during our hearings on the Arts and Humanities legislation.

Mr. Harris said that, in the years ahead, as a nation we will be searching for "a quality of experience to fit

the quality of life." We have talked a great deal about our need to focus on "quality". We have talked about the quality of life which stems from an understanding and appreciation of cultural values. But Mr. Harris has clearly demonstrated that the large majority of our people are now eager to find those experiences which deepen their awareness of these values.

Museums, in their best meaning, in all they can bring to us, can greatly help us to find the "quality of experience" Mr. Harris describes.

I invite you to move forward toward new goals, and, as always, stand ready to help in any way I can.